

Pierce (G. A.)

CASE OF OVARIAN TUMOR TREATED BY ELECTRICITY*

BY

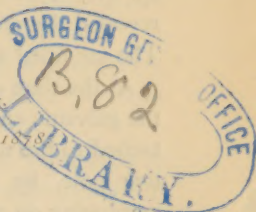
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August 15th, 1877, Dr. Pierce brought to my office for consultation, Miss H. æt. 34, with the following history :

Family record good. No cases of tumors, &c., known among her ancestors. She has usually enjoyed good health, and, being a farmer's daughter, had worked hard the most of her life.

She began menstruating at about the age of fifteen years and her periods were always regular and continued so. She has experienced no serious illness at any time within her recollection. She now presents a sallow look, is much emaciated, abdomen very large and it is with difficulty that she can breathe and move around. About the umbilicus she measures 41 1-2 inches, and from the latter part to the anterior superior spinous process of the right ilium, 12 inches, and to that of the left, 11 inches. There is no œdema of the lower extremities, nor is there any indication of general anasarca. Action of the heart, natural; urine, normal; respiration also normal. It is impossible to map out the boundaries of the liver. The measurement of the uterine cavity is 2 1-2

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inches. There is a fulness and fluctuation in the cul-de-sac of Douglas, and a general dullness exists over the entire abdomen nearly up to the ensiform cartilage, and fluctuation is very distinct. Dullness on percussion is very decided also in the lumbar region. Turning the patient upon either side apparently causes no floating of the intestines.

She stated that while menstruating about Sept. 1st, 1875, she took cold, and soon after noticed an enlargement over the region of the right ovary, which gradually increased in size. She came under the treatment of Dr. Pierce, June 2d, 1877, at which time the abdomen was 37 1-2 inches.

On the 20th of July she was tapped and about 23 pounds of fluid obtained, the measurement about the abdomen being reduced to 27 inches. Aug. 27th, '77, about 8 ounces of fluid were obtained and examined both chemically and microscopically, with the following result : Neutral, sp. gr., 1,020; albumen well shown. The microscopic examination revealed the presence of ovarian corpuscles and crystals of cholesterine. The sac filled again to its original dimensions in about six weeks.

At the time of the consultation, I advised the doctor to make use of the galvanic current, introducing one of Kidder's insulated needles attached to the negative pole, directly into the sac, and applying the positive pole, by use of the sponge, over the surface of the abdomen, employing on an average about sixteen cells. The application I advised to be made as often as once or twice a week, and each application to continue through a period of from fifteen to twenty minutes, as I had seen them thus made in somewhat similar case by Dr. Wheeler of Chelsea, Mass. At the same time I spoke of Dr. Cutter's method of using his large needles with his cautery battery in the treatment of uterine fibroids, and expressed the belief that great good was to come from it.

By some strange error a Cutter's cautery battery with his large needles was sent on to Dr. Pierce by Codman & Shurtleff of Boston. The use of the battery was commenced Sept. 3d, electricity being applied at intervals of from four to seven days. She was persuaded to have the needles used the first time without the administration of an anaesthetic, the pain was so intense, however, that chloroform was employed each time thereafter. The needles were introduced seven times and with a marked diminution in the amount of fluid after each introduction. Electricity was applied for the last time on Nov. 6th. Each application had varied in duration from ten to twenty minutes. After the last application, no presence of fluid could be detected. Her general health at this

time (Nov. 6,) is very much improved, and there is, as yet, no sign of filling.

Dec. 2d.—The patient was again brought to my office. No fluid could be detected. The points of insertion of the needles appeared, and the tissue is considerably indurated. The liver is normal. The patient, however, feels very weak, although her appetite is good and functions normally performed.

March 4th.—She is gaining in strength. There is no filling of the abdomen. There is, however, decided tenderness on pressure upon the right side over what seems to be the remains of the sac.

I believe this to be the first case of ovarian cyst ever treated by means of the large Cutter needles and cautery battery. While the treatment is one to which I should not care to subject another patient, and one which I certainly would not recommend, yet it seems to me to demonstrate the fact that a much stronger current of electricity can be borne by the patient in the treatment of ovarian tumors than has hitherto been believed. The remains of what is supposed to be the sac feels wrinkled or corrugated, a condition which Dr. Wheeler informs me he has noticed in his treatment of ovarian cysts by the milder galvanic current.

March 22d.—1878, Dr. Pierce writes me that Miss H. is regular as regards time and amount in her menstrual periods. No enlargement of abdomen, but suffers greatly from indigestion and an inactive state of the liver.

